A QUALITATIVE APPROACH TO UNDERSTANDING THE EVERYDAY DIFFERENCE BETWEEN ACQUAINTANCESHIP AND FRIENDSHIP: HOW WESTERN ORGANIZATIONAL MEMBERS DISCRIMINATE THESE CONCEPTS THROUGH COMMUNICATIVE INTERACTION

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THESIS

Presented to the Faculty

of the University of Alaska Fairbanks

in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

for the Degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

By

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Fairbanks, Alaska

May 2006

Abstract

Stewart & Bennett posited the term "friend," used by members of U.S. Amercian culture,"may refer to anyone from a passing acquaintance to a lifetime intimate" (pp. 100-101). Although American use of the term illustrates broad applicability as acceptable, Americans describe the label as having different meanings depending on those to whom they apply it. This qualitative research study utilizes narrative inquiry to gain a better understanding of the everyday lived experience of U.S. American organizational members' friendships and acquaintanceships within the organizational setting and how they perceive the way they discern between friends and acquaintances inside an organization in comparison to those interpersonal relationships in their everyday social world. Through thematic analysis of capta from the conversational interviews of seven co-researchers, two themes arose: American organizational members have difficulty identifying "friend," and differentiate "friend" from "organizational friend" by whether the relationship is primarily based in an infra or supra-contextual setting.

Table of Contents

Page

Acknowledgments

First and foremost, I dedicate this work to my sons Devin, Dolan, and Dalson. This has always been an investment in your futures.

There are an immense number of individuals whose participation, support, and mentoring was critical in the completion of this document and the achievement of my goals. No doubt, were I to list them all, this section would be as long as the thesis itself. I would first like to acknowledge members of my family. My sons and their mother, Lori; my brothers Andy, Nick, and Ryan; my parents Terry Hines, Larry and Patricia Weaver, Annette Beck, and Ben Abbott; My grandparents Mary Jo and Howard, and Glen and Gladys; Brandywyn (the woman with whom I live) and her children.

I would like to recognize Glen Bacon, Bill Spiers, and David Allen; all talented, wise, contributing, public servants whose relationships with me began at work, whose letters of recommendation contributed to my educational pursuits, and whom I always refer to as "friends."

I extend great appreciation to the men who taught me to play handball throughout the last year: Jim Allen, Jim Deitz, Kelly Everett, Milt Behr, Chuck Uotila, and Jim Johnson. You folks provided enjoyable fellowship and made a workout pure enjoyment.

For their mentorship in my education and life, I wish to sincerely thank my professors and the members of my graduate TA cohort: Dr. P. McWherter, Dr. R. Arundale, Dr. J. Brown, Dr. C. Cooper, and Dr. M. S. N. Rao, Christen, Doobie, Michelle, Natavan, Nick, and Patrick. Many of you have become family to me; I truly hope we continue to have opportunities for work and play together.

Chapter 1

Review of Related Literature

1.1 Statement of the Problem and Goals of the Research

I became interested in the topic of interpersonal relationships in organizations while talking with a group of friends and the topic of friendship in the workplace came about. Each member of the conversational group related stories of their experiences in work settings where they were either protected or injured (emotionally, financially, or in regard to their career) by someone they considered to be a friend. And there were accounts of how a good friend co-worker had covered for them in a way that preserved their employment at the organization. There were accounts of how they felt they had acquired a deep friendship with a co-worker who then used information that had been disclosed through the friendship to get them fired or to get a promotion over them.

There were some interesting elements in common across each of these stories. In the protection scenarios, when I inquired about the current status of this espoused good friendship, a common response was that they had not been in more than casual contact with the friend since leaving the organizational setting. In the injury scenarios, it was not uncommon for the injured storyteller to continue to maintain a working relationship with the perpetrator as well as even express some level of respect or admiration at the alleged injurer's ability to profit from the tort. These seemed like strange characteristics of friendship to me. I expend considerable effort to maintain "good" friendships; I certainly try to keep the company of friends as often as possible. If a co-member of a "deep"

friendship were to cause me injury through misuse of trust I certainly would not continue to maintain any type of relationship with that person.

I pointed these issues out to the group, stated my concerns, and asked, "Why are these relationships different than those we hold in the everyday social world? Why are the rules different? Why do we change the definition of friend and acquaintance when we use those labels inside the walls of an organization?" The respondents in the group indicated that friendship is indeed different in the social world than it is in an organization, but they found it quite difficult to explain why. This conversation set the stage for my own curiosity and led to this study.

The purpose of this research is twofold. The first goal of this research is to better understand the everyday lived experience of U.S. American organizational members' friendships and acquaintanceships within the organizational setting. The second goal is to better understand how they perceive the way they discern between friends and acquaintances inside an organization and friends and acquaintances in their everyday social world differ. This chapter reviews the related literature that functions as the foundational framework for this communication study.

1.2 Friends and Acquaintances

At the time of this writing there are roughly 6.5 billion people on planet Earth, most of whom will remain strangers for the entirety of their lives. Despite this staggering statistic, most of them will create, maintain, and even pursue more intimate interpersonal relationships than that of strangers. Although this is true among all populations, this study looks specifically at U.S. American culture. Even the least observant member of U.S.

American culture will quickly point out that American society is a tossed salad of demographic features. It would be a mistake to believe that the West "is a homogenous social world that everyone experiences identically," however there are a general set of patterns within U.S. American society that have a clear and measurable impact on personal relationships (Wood, 2000, p. 104; Allan, 1993).

1.2.1 The importance of interpersonal relationships. Human beings are social animals. The continuation of the human species literally requires communicative interaction. Human beings seek the company of others, preferring social interaction to isolation; some scholars suggest we are merely beings until acquiring interaction, that we only become human in the company of others. Even people in U.S. American cultures who possess an individualistic sense of self and an appreciation for individuality are most comfortable in social settings. The human need for bonding is well documented; there are documented medical consequences for not engaging in interpersonal relationships. For example, modern medical studies reveal that socially integrated people live longer than socially isolated people (Fehr, 1996, p. 3). Medical evidence indicates people with few friendships are more prone to infections and diseases such as tonsillitis and cancer, and people engaged in the process of divorce are statistically more likely to be mugged, and injured in a traffic accident (Duck, 1983, p. 7). The friendships people maintain become more than merely comforting; they become "human medical insurance" and "important safeguards against occupational stress, psychological illness, negative life events, and the like" (Duck, 1983, p. 8). Duck indicates that interpersonal relationships such as friendship serve the important functions of providing a "sense of belonging, emotional

integration and stability," "opportunities for communication about ourselves," "assistance and physical support," "reassurance of our worth value," and "opportunity to help others" (pp. 15-25).

Those with a social constructionist view of reality argue that it is this human interaction that gives rise to human meaning; some even suggest communicative interaction contrives human thought (Gergen, 1997, Harré & Gillett, 1997). In short, personal relationships are a fundamental element of human existence and experience. We define, create, negotiate, maintain, and deconstruct all interpersonal relationships through communicative interaction. For instance we all have several different kinship relatives: some "close" and some "distant." We have lovers, roommates, neighbors, co-workers, and associates. Two of the most significant types of interactants are friends and acquaintances. These more abstract categorizations may seem unimportant until others refer to us by these classifications. In our everyday life experiences, we often care a lot about which label is applied to us by those with whom we are involved in interpersonal relationships. Being called a "friend" means something quite different to us than being called an "acquaintance," but do we all apply these labels in the same manner? For example, why is it that one might consider self a friend to one person, while that person refers to self as an acquaintance?

1.2.2 Defining friend. Fehr (1996) points out, "Everyone knows what friendship is – until asked to define it. Then it seems, no one knows" (p. 5). In U.S. American culture the label "friend" is used quite liberally. Americans keep "numerous relationships marked by friendliness and informality" and the term "friend" used by a member of this

culture "may refer to anyone from a passing acquaintance to a lifetime intimate" (Stewart & Bennett, 1991, pp. 100-101). Some persons measure their social wealth by a commodity of friend relationships. U.S. American cultural members are often comfortable referring to people they encounter on a regular basis as friends, despite how little they may know about these regular interactants.

In the American English language, we possess a common lexis, but our usage of words often confers an altered, or entirely different, meaning than that dictated in our lexicons. According to the *American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language* (2000a), "friend" is defined as, "a person whom one knows, likes, and trusts." Within this lexicon, criteria have been set by which to judge whether an individual is a friend or not. Why is it then so difficult to make such an evaluation?

Part of the issue may be that the typical lexiconical definition is ambiguous at best. "Knows," "likes," and "trusts" to what extent? Of all the people whom we refer to as friends, which ones would we let borrow our vehicles, trust to care for our children, or keep our deepest secrets? Another part of this relational conundrum lies in the nature of friend as a label. Unlike other identifying labels, friend is not one that merely signals the social position of one person in relation to another, but rather indicates some idea of the quality and nature of a relationship (Allan, as cited by Fehr, 1996, p. 6). The word "friend" does not represent concretely tangible qualities, but rather hazy nebulae of interpretable attributes. These attributes help define both what a friend is and what a friend is not, but the highly interpretable meanings create difficulty in quantifying the term.

Another part of the issue lies in the very nature of lexiconical definitions. A lexicon is really a description of language and, because the descriptions themselves are composed of language, the descriptive meanings are made understandable by illustrating each word in relationship to other words. This conceptual framework, however, may be helpful when applied to interpersonal relationships; relationships are described in much the same way. Konstan (1997) notes that "social concepts do not exist in a vacuum" and "friendship in any society is bounded by a set of alternative relationships that mark off its specific dimensions and properties" (p. 6). In his approach to looking at ancient Greek and Roman friendships he suggests the identification of these boundaries is a philological task involving:

> identifying the vocabulary of friendship and specifying its connections both with terms denoting other bonds in Greek or Latin and with the modern personal advantage or gain and accordingly disembedded from the patterns of exchange and reciprocity that characterize social relations such as marriage and commerce. (pp. 6-7).

So, what then is the vocabulary of modern friendship?

The vocabulary of friendship depends on many factors such as age, race, social class, gender, and often by how a research question is posed. Communication scholarship tends to agree that friend is not only one of several communicatively familial terms belonging to the greater genre of interpersonal relationships, but is also a genre term itself containing subgroups of communicatively familial terms that create distinctions about levels or degrees of defining attributes. Some such sub-group terms are good friend, close

friend, and best friend. Studies on friendship are often qualitative and the defining attributes common to studies of adult conceptualizations include the topics of trust, intimacy, sharing, caring, socializing, enjoyment, and acceptance (with no significant differences between genders) (Fehr, 1996, p. 12). While relationships tend to share common features, those commonalities espoused by the previously mentioned studies are specifically associated with U.S. American culture (Wood, 2000, p. 12, Stewart, 1991). An individual's perspective identifies and uses these terms, and that perspective is a standpoint "shaped by diverse material, social and symbolic circumstances" (p. 104). These standpoints are Western bias, communicated in a monologic view of relationships; it could be argued that they actually exist dialectically, and the descriptors would certainly differ from a standpoint shaped by a different culture (Baxter & Montgomery, 1996).

Communication scholars take different approaches to using this vocabulary to create conceptual definitions. Fehr (1996) recognizes three categories: general, specific, and converse (pp. 7-8). In the general definition category, some scholars such as Hinde (1979), and Berscheid and Peplau (1983) focus on the existence of a dyad that is frequented by interdependent interaction. In the specific definition category, other scholars such as Hartup (1975), Hays (1988), Reisman (1979), Wright (1984), Donelson and Gullahorn (1977), and Rawlins (1992) focus on portrayals of friendship as "a voluntary, personal relationship, typically providing intimacy and assistance, in which the two parties like one another and seek each other's company" and as "personal, implying affective ties (e.g., love, caring), and characterized by equality…and mutual

involvement" (Fehr, 1996, p. 7). Konstan (1997) notes, "one aspect of friendship universally emphasized in modern discussions is the need for self-disclosure as the basis for intimacy and trust between friends" (p. 15). In the converse definition category, scholars such as Reisman (1979) focus on what a friend is not; for example friends are not typically sexual partners or blood relatives (Fehr, 1996, p. 8).

Upon survey of the plethora of interpersonal relationship research conducted in the last half century, one can clearly see the complex and ethereal nature of defining "friend." Each of the definitions presented have their confirmations and refutations by other communication scholars, scholars of other disciplines, and the humans who employ their interpretations of the concept from their varying perspectives and conditioning. Konstan (1997) illustrates this point explaining, "the idea of friendship… [is] dispersed, assuming different configurations depending on social environment and even on transient concerns" (p. 18). The primary consideration is, however, that all the research, both quantitative and qualitative alike, work from a single foundational premise: humans define the term through communicative interaction in their lived experience.

1.2.3 Defining acquaintance. "Acquaintance" is a term most commonly used to refer to an interpersonal relationship with less familiarity than a friendship. Referring back to the *American Heritage Dictionary* (2000b), acquaintance is defined as, "knowledge of a person acquired by a relationship less intimate than friendship." This definition seems to indicate several important points. The first part requires knowing; knowledge of a person separates the acquaintance from a stranger. The second part requires a relationship; a relationship indicates the existence of reciprocal knowledge by

the dyadic members. The third part differentiates acquaintances from friends by the level of intimacy involved. It is important to note here, in regard to points two and three, that where research on friendship indicates intimacy is gained through reciprocal self-disclosure, the reciprocal knowledge element in acquaintanceship is not connected to self-disclosure, but rather to informational exchange. Self-disclosure is typically associated with personal information whereas information exchange most often defines information of an impersonal nature. Bell (1981) notes a substantial amount of information can be exchanged by acquaintances, while maintaining an insignificant level of intimacy and without exchange of confidences (p. 22). Finally, including the word "friend" indicates that an acquaintance is something different than a friend, but possessing similar attributes. To really understand the notion of acquaintance, we have to refer back to the definition of friend where we are again confronted by the concepts that make the "friend" label problematic.

1.3 The Organizational Setting

Do these conceptual understandings of friendship and acquaintanceship apply unilaterally across all communicative social situations? Among the various social settings in which U.S. American cultural members engage, the setting of an organizational enterprise is a significant one. Fisher (1993) suggests, "Most people spend the majority of their waking lives in, around, and involved with organizations" (p. xv). So, what exactly is an organizational enterprise?

1.3.1 Defining the organizational enterprise. When the average U.S. American hears the word "organization," they likely think of multiple persons, based out of a

central physical location, and working toward a common purpose. Is that all there is to an organization? Is it that simple? When humans collaborate into formal structural relationships to address goal accomplishment, do they require a physical setting or central base? Complex structural relationships may require a network, but do not necessarily require a common physical setting to support that network. The advent of open source software proves that individuals from a large number of immensely different physical locations can collaborate in concerted action toward a common purpose without ever engaging in simultaneous information exchange. In such a situation, an utterance does not lose its communicative value despite never receiving a direct reply. Daniels, Spiker, and Papa (1997) describe organizations as "elaborate and complicated forms of human endeavor," and while this is clearly the nature of organizations, it doesn't quite get at the process that is organizations (p. 2). Pepper (1995) argues that organizations are "communication events" (p. 11) and Fisher (1993) confirms that "an organization is communication" (p. 3).

These descriptions, while quite sufficient on their own for the communication scholar, do not quite synthesize the nature of organizations nor, in my experience, the natural language the average American organizational member uses to describe and discuss organizations. Keyton (2005) gets suitably close to this synthesis, defining an organization as, "a dynamic system of organizational members, influenced by external stakeholders, who communicate within and across organizational structures in a purposeful and ordered way to achieve a superordinate goal" (p. 10). This definition addresses the idea of the setting as a dynamic system, thus not requiring physical

location, and further addresses the extra-organizational entities that influence all parts of the system. It speaks to the collaboration being intentional and purposeful and, most importantly, it indicates communication as the foundational facilitator. For purposes of this study, an organizational enterprise may be a place of employment such as a business, a non-profit organization, a club, or any organization that bears the elements of Keyton's definition.

1.3.2 Communication in organizations. Communication is the lifeblood of an organizational enterprise, and competent communication is required in order for an organization to be effective in meeting goals. Communication functions on all levels in an organization, linking all members of the organization and its external stakeholders (Klauss & Bass, 1982, p. 1). Organizational members use "symbols, messages, and meanings to communicate (and create) their organizational cultures" (Keyton, 2005, p. 40).

Because communication is the central phenomenon, organizations tend to have clearly identifiable networks of interactants. In business and non-profit organizations alike, networks of contacts are highly important "human capital" (Dessler, 1995, p. 13). Networks of interpersonal relationships, such as friends and acquaintances, are especially important to organizational communication, and act to improve the flow of information to and from organizational members (Eisenberg & Goodall, 2004; Keyton, 2005). Organizational members construct a closely-knit cluster of interpersonal relationships that tend to interact with each other outside the presence of the member and exist as generally stable established lines of discourse; this cluster consists of "friends." The

organizational member sustains such a cluster, but also maintains a loosely-knit collection of "acquaintances" that each has their own cluster of friends. Because of this social structure, those acquaintances are "not merely a trivial acquaintance tie but rather a crucial bridge between two densely knit clumps of close friends" (Granovetter, 1983, p. 202). Organizational members without acquaintances serving this structural purpose "will be deprived of information from distant parts of the social system" (Granovetter, p. 202). For all types of organizations, limited access to information means a limitation in their ability to be productive toward their superordinate goal; a limitation that can certainly destroy the enterprise.

1.3.3 Research on dyadic communication in organizations. Communication, in any setting, is the primary way in which we create personal relationships, and such relationships come into existence via interaction with relational partners (Wood, 2000, p. 245). Many types of communicative interactions occur across an organization's structure, but the most prevalent form is dyadic. Dyadic communication refers to communicative interaction between two individuals, the most basic unit at which human interaction occurs within the organizational setting. The dyad is where the bulk of an organization's communicative interaction occurs (Daniels & Spiker, 1997, p. 200).

Much of the research in organizational communication is focused on this type of interaction. The research conducted in the area of dyadic communication "stems from the human relations, group dynamics, and motivational schools of industrial psychology and administrative science" (Goldhaber, 1990, p. 213). Although there are many forms and types of dyadic relationships within an organization, scholars in organizational

communication have focused almost entirely on positional roles, and nearly all of that research has focused on the dyadic relationship of superior-subordinate (Daniels & Spiker, 1997, p. 200). The reason for this is no mystery; organizations are built on strategic structuring theories in which the goal is to utilize managerial control to ensure organizational effectiveness. Authority structures and the functional duties they assign to organizational members define positional roles (Pace & Faules, 1994, p. 139). Positional relationships become the girders that support and direct the flow of information into formal communication channels. Further, a predominant model in human relations sees the promotion of interpersonal relationships as a means of compliance gaining (Daniels & Spiker, 1997, p. 201). Believing the superior-subordinate dyad to be the most important relationship in an organization, researchers have been "preoccupied with revealing strategies for superiors to use in communicating with subordinates for accomplishment of organizational objectives" (Daniels & Spiker, 1997, p. 201). The few other dyadic relationships looked at by organizational communication scholars include the mentor-protégé dyad, dyadic linkages within networks, and the romantic relationship development.

Despite the amount of attention given to the superior-subordinate type dyad, the high volume of horizontal communication must not be discounted in its importance. Horizontal communication occurs laterally across an organization's structure and is "probably the strongest of all flows in terms of information and understanding" (Lewis, 1980, p. 67). Where previous research centers on a manager's strategic relationships with line workers, horizontal communication makes up the bulk of the line worker's

communicative relationships. In the lower levels of the organization, "horizontal communication is disproportionately greater than vertical" and "typically relates to task coordination, problem solving, information sharing, and conflict resolution (Lewis, 1980, p. 67). Because the majority of members in an organization are "low-level" and the majority of their communication is horizontal, it is fair to say the majority of communicative interactions in an organization occur in this manner.

Although horizontal communication makes up an estimated two-thirds of an organization's communication overall, evidence indicates this is not enough to provide adequate task coordination, and emotional and social support (Lewis, 1980, p. 68). As a result, organizational members develop a communication network commonly referred to as the metaphorical "grapevine." The information traveling through the grapevine supplements formal communication messages and Lewis indicates many organizational studies "show that almost five out of every six messages are carried by the grapevine instead of the official organizational channels" (p. 69). What makes the grapevine unique is that it ignores established channels of information flow, and positional roles all together. With these factors ignored, the aspects influencing "the flow of information are more personal" (Pace & Faules, 1994, p. 136). The grapevine can be "a valuable source of social support and identification" as well as "a source of innovation," but it also has its caveats (Eisenberg & Goodall, 2004, p. 244). One danger of grapevine communication, because it operates outside of formal communication channels and often fails to respect the organizational chart, is that it can lead to reinforcing "griping and spreading unsubstantiated rumors" (Eisenberg & Goodall, p. 244). Another danger is that people

tend to communicate with others who are similar to them based on demographics and job function, thus hindering innovation and other strengths that arise from interaction in diversity (Eisenberg & Goodall, p. 244). In addition to providing environmental and technological elements that promote diversity and cross-structural communication in the unstructured forums, a key element in keeping the network healthy is to promote positive personal relationships (Eisenberg & Goodall, pp. 234-244).

1.3.4 Interpersonal dyadic relationships in organizations. Organizational communication research commonly identifies quality interpersonal relationships as key to effective communicative interactions within an organization. Eisenberg & Goodall (2004) define positive personal relationships as "crucial to the survival of individuals, teams, and organizations," further noting that "without positive work relationships, the work gets done slowly, poorly, or not at all" (p. 234). They advocate the social support network that is created by positive work relationships, as well as a "sense of identification with and participation in the organizational dialogue" (p. 234). Those who are socially isolated in an organization not only lose these valuable resources, "they may also be viewed by others as expendable inasmuch as they fail to build relationships with others that allow them to showcase their contributions" (p. 235). Relationship characteristics are contextual factors in interpersonal relationships in organizations, and they are perceived as personal attributes of message senders and receivers and their perceptions of each other. They influence the "quality, level, content, and directionality of communication" and consist of trust, motives and needs, and similarity (Klauss & Bass, 1982, pp. 23-26). These contextual factors reflect traits used to define friendship and acquaintanceship. It would

seem then by this shared vocabulary, that friends and acquaintances, as relational roles, would be relevant in studying this area of organizational communication. If organizational members frequently ignore positional roles, and consequently the formal communication channels, from what do they model their organizational interpersonal relationships?

Corman, Banks, Bantz, and Mayer's (1990) adaptation of Jablin's (1985) research on task/work relationships, recognizes that people are culturally conditioned to understand what organizationally appropriate behavior looks like in these relationships, prior to ever engaging in such relationships. Corman et al. categorize the forces that influence our perceptions and beliefs about communication in organizations as: family, educational institutions, the mass media, peers, and part-time jobs (pp. 172-173). This learning process begins before children are even school-aged. From the time we are young children, our parental figures model organizational communication behavior, our educational institutions expose us to the way participants of varying occupations communicatively interact in different ways, and the mass media portrays the specific traits of individuals successful in task/work roles (pp. 172-173). If perceptions of task/work relationships are influenced by extra-organizational relationships, it seems only natural that, in those communicative interactions without consideration for channel or positional role, we model our interpersonal relationships within organizations after the interpersonal relationships of our extra-organizational social world. This is further emphasized by Eisenberg and Goodall's (2004) observation that "the boundary between work life and personal life is highly permeable" (p. 222). In fact, the qualities and

characteristics associated with home life, such as intimacy and extended interaction time, are a part of work life, while the work life associated characteristics, such as goal setting and pursuit, scheduling, and efficiency, are now a part of U.S. American home life (Eisenberg & Goodall, p. 222; Hochschild, 1997).

U.S. Americans create friendships around work, but tend to "keep relations with friends separate from social or work obligations" (Stewart & Bennett, 1991, p. 101). Americans perceive distinctions between social friends and acquaintances, and organizational friends and acquaintances; we espouse a separation of friendships and working relationships, but still refer to both sets of relationships as friends. What influences this distinction? The primary difference between organizational and extra-organizational settings (in U.S. American organizational culture) is the authority structure created positional roles and communication channels. Do these organizational constraints shape the way interactants discriminate between friends and acquaintances at an organization and those of their everyday social lives?

1.4 Summary

Defining the labels "friend" and "acquaintance" is no simple task. Many factors play into the descriptive and often individualized definitions of these concepts, and experience indicates factors in an organizational setting influence the way the definition is narrated. The organizational setting is one in which U.S. American cultural members spend a significant portion of their lives. Organizations work toward self-serving goals and communication is the primary operation by which goal-oriented tasks are accomplished. The authoritative structure of an organization defines positional roles and

creates formal communication channels through which information is intended to flow. Much of the organizational communication research focuses on a very few dyadic relationships in the organizational setting based on positional roles. A significant portion of organizational communication, however, occurs outside the formal network and in spite of positional roles. This would seem to make non-positionally defined interpersonal dyadic communication an important area of organizational communication to examine. Organizational members model their task/work roles for organizational behavior after extra-organizational relationships. The literature suggests extra-organizational relationships model, or at least influence, our personal and informal communicative relationships inside the organizational setting as well. This would help explain why organizational members refer to their organizational relationships with a vocabulary similar to that they use to describe their other interpersonal relationships. Despite the use of a common vernacular in labeling, however, people indicate there is a difference between friends and acquaintances in the organizational setting, and friends and acquaintances outside the organizational setting. This research centers on those differences and focuses on understanding the lived experience of U.S. American cultural organizational members in discerning these differences through their communicative interactions.

Chapter 2

Research Methodologies

In evaluating research, it is always helpful to understand research contexture; the philosophical genealogy from which its mode of inquiry descends. This pedigree operates under the rules of a particular ontology, is founded in a particular epistemology, and is guided by a theoretical perspective that influences a methodological choice, that helps determine a particular method (or methods) to be used in acquiring data or capta for examination.

2.1 Ontology

Ontology is the study of being, or what is. It functions "alongside epistemology" in the research schema, merging and interweaving its issues, making separation of the two conceptually difficult (Crotty, 1998, p. 10). Because of these characteristics it is impractical and unnecessary to separate the two. In order to move forward without over complicating the ontological part of this interconnected structure, I will state only that this research is imbued by an ontology of Realism; it operates within the confines of a universe in which matter and energy exist outside the subjective human mind.

2.2 Epistemology

Epistemology is "how we know what we know," and is "concerned with providing a philosophical grounding for deciding what kinds of knowledge are possible" (Crotty, 1998, p. 8). This research is grounded in the epistemology of Constructionism, which rejects the idea of objective truth and sees meaning as constructed in the mind through interaction with our worldly realities (Crotty, p. 8). In this way of understanding,

it is not merely possible, but accepted and assumed that "different people may construct different meaning in different ways, even in relation to the same phenomenon" (Crotty, p. 9). This is the epistemology most often invoked in qualitative research (Crotty, p. 9)

2.3 Theoretical perspective

The theoretical perspective is the philosophical stance that brings a particular set of assumptions to the chosen methodology; it is the researcher's "view of the human world and social life within that world, wherein such assumptions are grounded" (Crotty, 1998, p. 7). This research is based in the theoretical perspective of the Social Construction of Reality. Social Constructionism views the individual person and their worldly realities to be a co-constructed product of "basic social interactions whereby we enter into the perceptions, attitudes and values of a community" (Crotty, p. 8). Qualitative researchers see all realities as socially constructed, acknowledge the close inter-relationship between research and researcher, and recognize "the situational constraints that shape inquiry" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000, p. 8)

2.4 Research Methodology

According to Crotty (1998), research methodology is "the research design that shapes our choice and use of particular methods and links them to the desired outcomes" (p. 7). Methodology establishes the contextural rules for the researcher to determine "how to frame a problem in such a way that it can be investigated using particular designs and procedures," and "how to select and develop appropriate means of generating data" (Schwandt, 2001, p. 161). This study draws from Narrative Inquiry, a methodology used

by the scholars of many disciplines through a wide array of methods to study "the ways humans experience the world" (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990, p. 2).

2.5 Methods

2.5.1 Conversational Interviews. In order to meet this study's goal of gaining greater understanding of the human lived experience of the topic of research, it was necessary to solicit co-re-searchers stories. Humans are storytellers. When we engage in the act of storytelling, we do not merely relate our experiences, but create our very identities; through our narration "we express, display, [and] make claims for who we are" (Mishler, 1999, p. 19). Although a survey, or even a rigidly structured interview, may provide direct information from a participant, narrative data provides deep, rich, verbal illustration of human living. Based on this evaluation of methods, I chose to collect data through the method of conversational interviewing. The conversational interview is a type of professional conversation, based on the conversations held in daily life. Kvale (1996) defines this type of conversation as "an interview whose purpose is to obtain descriptions of the life world of the interviewee with respect to interpreting the meaning of the described phenomena" (pp. 5-6).

The professional conversation is unlike mundane conversation in many ways. Unlike the typical mundane conversation, the research interview has structure and purpose. It consists of two co-participants, but whose authority is unbalanced; not to be mistaken for the equal participant roles of the mundane conversation, in the research interview the interviewer maintains control of the authority end of the conversation's power structure. The researcher/interviewer introduces the topic and solicits co-

researcher narratives by asking open-ended questions, whereas the co-researcher/interviewee recreates his or her lived experiences through narrative storytelling, thereby forming the foundation of the research capta (p. 36). It is a "purposeful engagement" in which common themes are united in "goal-directed processes" (Polkinghorne, 1995, p. 5). The researcher maintains a "type of conceptual scheme by which a contextual meaning of individual events can be displayed" which acts as purposeful scaffolding "through which people understand and describe the relationship between the events and choices of their lives" (p. 7).

By addressing the researcher's open ended questions, the co-researcher provides a knowledge perspective from his or her experience in the topic. The researcher listens critically and further explores that experience with follow-up questions and seeks "answers to questions that stress *how* social experience is created and given meaning" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000, p. 8). While it is true that no co-researcher has exactly the same experience, nor relates it in exactly the same way, the narratives acquired from all participants on a matter of lived experience contribute to the research presentation of the always complex, and often controversial, human world (pp. 5-7). Studying the human world in this manner is a worthy endeavor for any researcher. To understand human experience is to understand the human way of creating and interpreting meaning; to do this is to understand who we are as humans and to know what human meaning is, to approach an understanding of human reality.

The purpose of the qualitative researcher in this study is to gain an understanding of the lived experience of U.S. American organizational members' specifications of

friendships and acquaintanceships within their organizational setting and how they perceive they discern between friends and acquaintances inside and outside an organization. By engaging in narrative interviews, the co-researchers and I shared in the interpretive process of creating meaning.

2.5.2 Participants. In determining a population size, Kvale (1996) advises that the purpose of the study determines the proper number of participants. If the study focus is on the lived experience of a single person, then that single participant is sufficient; if general knowledge of a topic is the objective, a few intensive case studies should suffice (Kvale, p. 102). According to Lindlof and Taylor (2002), "no tests or coefficients exist to tell the researcher when the sample is big enough" (p. 129). Studies requiring large sample sizes could become highly impractical; time and resources play a role in determining the number of interviews conducted and the number in current studies tends to be "around 15 ± 10" (Kvale, p. 102). The capta collected in this study emerges from seven interviews conducted with individuals who currently belong to formal organizational enterprises. While it may have been possible to conduct more interviews, I determined, based on the capta and the nature of the study, that additional interviews would not have yielded significantly more knowledge (Kvale, p. 102).

Each of the co-researchers chosen to participate in this study are individuals with whom I had existing interpersonal relationships. My relationships with them occurred through attendance at university, prior employment, and community organizations. All belong to various organizational enterprises in Alaska. I contacted each by telephone to request their participation. The organizations represented by the sample in this study

consisted of government, non-profit, and private employers, as well as non-employment groups such as social, sports, and support organizations. Participants were active in their respective organizations in such roles as public servants, mentors, teachers, colleagues, co-workers, supervisors, and subordinates.

2.5.3 Procedure. When I contacted each co-researcher by phone, I explained the nature of the research and that I had contacted each of them in particular because of their rich life experiences relating to the topic of study. When the co-researcher and I began the interview, I started by briefly explaining that the research was about friendship and acquaintanceship and how U.S. American organizational members discriminate between these types of relationships in the organizational setting and in mundane social settings. I informed the participants that the interview would explore their experiences in how they define "friend" and "acquaintance" through their communicative interactions in these settings. There was no reason to conceal information about the study or its design, and so such information was available upon request. I made clear to the participants that the interview would be audio recorded, that their identities would be kept confidential, and that their participation was entirely voluntary.

All research conducted at the University of Alaska Fairbanks (UAF) utilizing human subjects requires approval by the local Institutional Review Board (IRB). This oversight process is intended to ensure research protocols do not endanger any participants in the research process. As part of this approved protocol, each co-researcher was provided with a written version of the Verbal Consent Form (Appendix A). This document describes the purpose of the study and its procedures, the level of

confidentiality to be upheld, and the potential risks and benefits involved. I read the Verbal Consent Form (Appendix A) to the co-researchers at the start of every interview and then gave a copy to each of them to keep.

I conducted the interviews by asking short, open-ended questions, in order to elicit elaborate narratives from the co-researchers. I sometimes interjected my own insights and experiences in order to encourage a continued dialogue on the subject; I also frequently asked follow-up questions to clarify a response. I recorded all the interviews on a digital audio recorder. Having started each interview with a loose structure around a particular scheme, I worked to lead the co-researcher in an intended direction. Once it appeared the conversational developments left little more to explore, I asked for final comments from the co-researchers and ended the interview. I transferred the digital recording from the recording device to my personal computer where all data was password protected. I utilized transcription software to transcribe the recordings into text; the software played the audio files back through my headphones while I typed the interviews into word processor software. I employed pseudonyms throughout the process as part of the effort to maintain a high level of confidentiality for all participants. The UAF Department of Communication will keep all of my records for a period of five years, after which all collected information will be destroyed.

2.5.4 Analysis. Once transcription of the materials is completed, the researcher "analyzes and writes about them" Denzin & Lincoln, 2000, p. 18). The intent of conducting narrative interviews in research is to describe and interpret "themes in the subject's lived world" (Kvale, 1996, p. 187). I utilized the thematic analysis method to

interpret the capta. To do so I "entered into a *dialogue* with the text" (Kvale, p. 182). Reading and re-reading the text, while listening to the audio recordings, I reconstructed my memories of the conversational interview, recalling how a co-researcher winced, grimaced, smiled, nodded, and other non-verbal actions. I added notes about these occurrences to the transcripts. The point of this part of the research endeavor is to have a sort of conversation with the authors of this documented conversation in hopes of interpreting meaning. The purpose of the interpretation is to identify themes that appear consistently across all the interviews that represent the co-researchers' intended meanings in regard to their experiences, to place these meanings into a narrative structure, and to scrutinize the meanings to gain an understanding regarding the topic of study. This interpretation should serve as a continuation of the co-researcher's story (Dukhovskaya, 2002, p. 44). This analysis is done so that the meanings of what was said may be enriched and deepened through the production and addition of developing, clarifying, and expanding textual expressions (Kvale, pp. 182-183). The developments, clarifications, and expansions to the textual reproduction of the conversation were not acts of judgment, but rather making connections, "seeking to find the relevance of the story itself" (Atkinson, 1998, p. 69). After making such a contribution to the transcriptions, I searched for common elements of natural language, analogous descriptions of experiences, related expressions of emotion and their catalysts, and identified these concepts as themes.

2.5.5 Researcher as the research tool. In qualitative research methods, the primary instrument in collecting data is the researcher; in conversational interviewing, the researcher is the research tool. The research tool always affects the research. Gendered

and multiculturally situated, the "researcher approaches the world with a set of ideas, a framework (theory, ontology) that specifies a set of questions (epistemology) that he or she then examines in specific ways (methodology, analysis)" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000, p. 18). To try to isolate the influence of the researcher on the research product not only goes against the purpose of this type of research, but is quite impossible to do in any type of research. Instead, researchers must identify his or her influence and interpretive lenses and acknowledge the impact on the research. This conversation between the researcher and co-researcher co-constructs new knowledge on a topic of mutual interest and, in the end, the final product is the researcher's story (Kvale, 1996, p. 125). Lindlof and Taylor (2002) espouse that there is "nothing wrong with this" as long as researchers "do not manipulate data in ways that distort the local contexts they studied" (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002, p. 244).

In accounting for the researcher's impact on the outcome of this study, it is important to know something of the researcher's past on the topic. My experience in defining friendship and acquaintanceship in different contexts and situations began, like most individuals in U.S. American culture, at an age too young to identify what I was actually doing. It was not until more recent experiences in organizational settings that I became cognizant of the concept and began to consciously participate in the application of these labels and the discernment between them. The most recent experiences have encouraged me to look back chronologically and examine the way this conceptualization occurs.

In my last place of employment, I worked as a public servant in a local government agency. It was there that I engaged in what I later recognized as a one-sided friendship with a supervisor who used the friendship to manipulate and ultimately preserve a dysfunctional organizational culture. In this working environment, the supervisor told me stories about my co-workers and advised me to stay away from them, while encouraging me to confide in and trust her. After experiencing the information and stories I related to her end up in performance appraisals, being used to elevate her own prestige in the organization at my work expense, and the ill-effects of communication segregation that resulted, I finally realized the extent to which my understanding of the differences in the way people identified and used "friend" in the organizational setting differed from other people. Disillusioned by this experience, I worked hard to locate the boundaries of the interpersonal relationships I held at work. One way I did this was to explore the nature of the relationship outside of the organizational setting; I created opportunities for interaction with co-workers (and others with positional titles in relation to mine) outside of the physical and temporal walls of the workday. In those settings I sought common interests beyond work-related topics. Tests like this created differentiations, but ones that were not always descriptively clear. The labels of "friend" and "acquaintance" could be modified with additional descriptors, but they only continued to complicate the ambiguous subtleties involved in using the root labels.

Looking retrospectively to my involvement in other organizational settings, I could see this phenomenon repeating itself. Each experience had varying layers specific to the organization, complicated by overlaid and varying types of stewardship. I have and

do belong to fraternal orders, sports clubs, social groups, philanthropic organizations, for-profit companies, and all-volunteer troupes, all of which have uniquely different, situationally contextualized, interpersonally based, linguistically expressed relational baggage.

My personal experiences on the topic have given me some common footing with those I interviewed on the topic. Through the combination of my educational and personal experiences, I am able to be an effective research instrument, collecting and examining data. I operate as research tool, gleaning new insights and meanings through interaction with my co-researchers and the synthesis of our life experiences.

Chapter 3

Narrative Perspectives

In order to better understand the lived experiences of U. S. Americans in discriminating the concepts of friendship and acquaintanceship inside and outside of organizational settings, I had to first acquire related narratives of their lived experiences. I chose to pursue this acquisition by soliciting their stories. According to Gergen and Gergen (1993), stories about self "serve as a critical means by which we make ourselves intelligible within the social world" (p. 7). As people narrate their stories, they relive their perceived experiences; when the narrator shares experience, then the storyteller as co-researcher and the interactive researcher create new meaning in a socially constructed, narratively shared experience. The storyteller is not merely a subject, but a co-researcher co-constructing new maps of old ground through a new perspectival lens. As I engaged in each interview, I not only lived the told experience vicariously through the co-researcher's telling, but co-constructed an entirely new shared experience through this communicatively expressed experiential interaction (Kvale, 1996).

I knew each of the co-researchers personally, each to a different degree, but I refer to each of them descriptively as "friends" in casual conversation. I attempted to prepare myself for the possibility of being disappointed. I knew the potential existed that I would ask each of them to give me their perspective on friendship and with that perspective I could learn that my relationship with each of them was not as strong as I had estimated. Despite this possibility, I did my best to allow all co-researchers the opportunity to honestly express their perspectives, without consequence. Fortunately, I did not have to

experience such disappointment. Nonetheless, I do not pretend that I was an objective observer. In fact, I exalt my role as co-researcher. No seeker in any scientific discipline can claim pure objectivity, and in this methodology of the human science discipline, such influence is embraced and employed for its usefulness in addressing the particular.

3.1 Andrew's Conversational Interview

"Andrew" is a pseudonym for an American-born male currently living in Fairbanks, Alaska. He is in his late forties and is employed as a public servant by a governmental agency as an office supervisor. He is also engaged in organized sports groups. The interview took place in a designated interview room at the University of Alaska Fairbanks. Andrew is well educated. His personal demeanor is calm and controlled; he exudes a wisdom based on life experience and edification in Eastern philosophies. Andrew's communication style is methodical and concise. He appears to be in full control of his non-verbals, and talks at a pace that indicates he analyzes each word before he speaks. Andrew's lengthy employment in an enforcement occupation has made him habitually difficult for me to read.

After reading the verbal consent form (Appendix A) and obtaining his taped consent, I began the interview by asking Andrew to reflect on interpersonal relationships he has, or has had, in an organizational setting that he refers to as friendships, and some that he refers to as acquaintanceships. Andrew stated he could think of a lot of acquaintanceships, but none that he would call friendships who were not friends prior to his becoming a part of the organization. He suggested this is because he both intentionally resists having personal relationships in organizations, and he defines

organizational friendship differently. Andrew told me he tries to keep business relationships separate from close personal relationships. He described work relationships that get too personal as invasive. He explained himself as "not a person that is probably easy to get close to, nor do I get close to other people easily," and continues that he does not need to have someone become a part of his personal life in order to be a sound business associate. He described his definition of friendship as "not very articulate," but "conceptually tight" and suggested a friend is someone he can entrust to act in his best interest in intimate personal matters.

From this conceptualization I was not sure that Andrew could perceive such a person filling this role in the workplace and asked for clarification. Co-workers are often called upon to act in a person's stead when he or she is not at work to do so. He then explained, "I mean, very intimate personal decisions, as opposed to corporate decisions…I entrust people to make [corporate] decisions for me, I delegate responsibility, but that wouldn't elevate anybody to what I would personally define as a friend." In an organizational workplace, he indicated the closest dyadic relationship he could have would be one in which he could trust another person with organizational decision making power. When I inquired as to how he would describe such a person, he matter-of-factly told me he would call them a "competent acquaintance." Andrew added that most of his relationships are utilitarian in nature; they are "partners of convenience for a certain transaction." He contends there are distinct work/task roles in organizations and a measurable standard by which the organizational members may determine if they are accomplishing their body of work. Further, whether in a supervisory or co-worker

role, he does not have to be best friends to be able to get along with the other members of the organization and mentioned, in a noticeably disparaging tone, that he had even been to recent trainings in which he was shown how to create the illusion of friendship with co-workers and subordinates through contextual and non-verbal manipulations. He stated that, despite the probability that the training was based on "good science" and would likely be successful, he does not utilize that training in organizational settings. Andrew remarked:

> I ask somebody about their kids because I'm curious about kids. That's a personal information trade that's got nothing to do with business, except that some trainers will train me that you've got to make sure you ask your subordinates about their kids and their home life because that helps you bond with them and they work better.

I was starting to get the impression that Andrew might conceptualize acquaintances as all being the same, regardless of context, but after thinking about it for another moment, he indicated that was not the case. I asked him if factors in an organization might play a role in that phenomenon, and he indicated he defines acquaintance the same in both organizational and non-organizational settings, but the nature of those relationships are different. After pausing for a moment he stated he perceives them differently due to the dynamics of the settings. When asked to clarify what he means by dynamics, he paused for a moment and then proposed that they involve the existence of structure and hierarchy within the organization, and how that structure affects information sharing.

Having discussed Andrew's experiences of differences in acquaintanceships inside and outside an organizational setting, I asked if he can see the potential for a friendship to occur in an organizational setting. He winced slightly and admitted being able to see the possibility, although the concept is mostly outside of his experience. He thought about it for a moment and acknowledged there are people with whom he works that he sometimes requests counsel from when a friend is unavailable for such counsel, while also pointing out that he chooses these co-workers based on their unique personal traits and experiences, rather than positional roles. In order to truly identify the "work friend" as "friend," Andrew explained, "I think it almost, from my point of view, has to lift itself out of the work environment in order to convert from acquaintanceship to friendship."

Andrew suggested that U.S. Americans mistakenly apply the word "friend" to many levels of personal relationship and use the label quite liberally. He admitted he challenges the word "friend" in modern usage, stating confidently that he reserves that label as "an honorific for a very select few, and maybe only one or two, in my entire life." Andrew mused that his own use of the word is inaccurate but, in his communicative experiences, he has been unable to find a word suitable for those "very select few" that would enable him to be more comfortable utilizing "friend" in a more generic version. I tried to elicit the foundation upon which he sees a difference in this conceptualization and he explained that he bases his definition of friendship on a "spiritual and emotional" basis, whereas, "you can have a highly evolved, efficient workplace that doesn't require me to invest any personal emotion into it."

Despite his views on separating work relationships from personal relationships, Andrew indicated recognizing the importance of polite interaction and the idea that being open to personal relationships in the workplace could improve productivity. I remembered a conversation from an organizational communication class I took in which it was proposed that task/work roles are lines of discourse that can exist regardless of who fills the roles as interactants. I requested Andrew's opinion and he quickly retorted that situations sometimes work only because of the "chemistry" between people. He related a story in which he allowed two subordinates to work together on a large combined workload; in his experience, if one of the two co-workers left the organization, the situation would affect the work. In connecting this idea to how he differentiates between friendships and acquaintanceships inside an organizational setting from those types of relationships outside of an organizational setting, he elucidated that interpersonal relationships inside the organizational setting are artificially created by the temporal and proxemic characteristics present in the organization's structure. For friendships to occur naturally, Andrew stated he takes a supervisory approach similar to the way in which several American universities have begun to approach sidewalk design. Andrew stated, "They just didn't put them [sidewalks] in for a couple of years. People found their way from building to building and then they paved where people actually walked, which is a whole lot better than trying to say, 'Here's a bunch of sidewalks, walk on them and don't walk on the grass.'" When I asked if he had anything further to add on the topic of study he added, "It's pretty clear from my responses to your questions that I don't have [an

understanding of the way I make "friend" and "work friend" distinctions] clarified in my head very well."

3.2 Belle's Conversational Interview

"Belle" is a pseudonym for a female co-researcher in her early thirties. She is a full-time employee, working at the management level of a non-profit organization. In addition to being employed full-time, she is a part-time student pursuing her Master's degree. Belle met with me after she finished work for the day in a designated interview room at UAF. Belle was eager to engage in conversation about the research topic and required little effort from me to elicit her experiences. Although I left her narration of personal experiences in organizational setting open to any type of organization, Belle focused primarily on her workplace.

The interview began with me reading the informed consent form (Appendix A) and Belle consenting to participate in the interview. Intending to help Belle establish a suitable frame of mind for her participation, I briefly described to her what I had found in the literature on the topic and what I considered the term "organization" to encompass. Belle offered that she could think of organizations that met that definition. Not wanting to get into organizational issues yet, I first asked Belle to describe her own conceptualizations of friend and acquaintance. She thought about it briefly and then described a friend as a "confidant" and acquaintance as similar to a friendship, but without intimacy or depth. I then inquired as to whether she conceptualizes friendships and acquaintanceships inside an organization in the same way. Belle expressed some confusion about the question at first, but after a bit of clarification on my part, she

responded, "It's basically the same, whether it is personal or professional. I have the same definition; I treat them the same way. It's a different context, but I look at it the same way as far as definitions go." This seemed a bit paradoxical to me; her use of language seemed to imply that there is no surface difference, but then admitted different contextual characteristics are a factor. Rather than seeking immediate clarification, I decided to push forward and attempt to further saturate the conversation in organizational concepts by asking how positional roles might influence her perceptions. By exploring this subtopic, Belle created the distinction for me, showing me I was confused by her use of language. She explained she uses the same definitional standard, but interacts in different ways based on the context of the organizational setting. She told me:

> If it's a colleague, for example, you're going to treat them more as an equal, but if it's my supervisor I'm going to treat them a little differently even if I'm close to them; you're going to treat them with more respect.

At this point I began to see that Belle does perceive a difference between interpersonal relationships in organizational settings and such relationships outside of organizational settings. Although she articulates the same semantic definition for friend regardless of the setting, her experiences indicate that contexts create the particular variations that differentiate the concepts. In Belle's experiences, the contextual influences, such as environment and an interactant's role, create different types of interaction.

I probed Belle further about her meaning and use of the word "interaction." Belle explained she sees friendships and acquaintanceships as having unique qualities, and that

it is her perspective, based on the dyadic interactions, that led to her decision of how to define an interpersonal relationship in any setting. I wondered what properties occurred in and about one of these interactions that influenced the labeling act. Belle, seemingly eager for me to understand, put much effort into clarifying her experience, visibly illustrated by contortion of her facial features and stuttering a bit as she began to speak. She vocalized her experience that the word friend is over used, stating, "it's kind of like the words 'I love you.' I think people overuse that and I think the word friend is much like that." Belle sees a word's usage as giving it meaning, and her communicative expressions seemed to indicate her dissatisfaction with the modern usage of "friend," as though it undermined the proper usage and diminished the quality of a relationship on which that label is bestowed. She further described the imagery she envisions when thinking about relationship labels; how the word "stranger" holds a negative connotation, and how she utilizes positional roles to express varying levels of friendship.

When I inquired further about this concept, she rested her elbows on the table, pressed one fisted hand into the palm of the other, tapped the embracing hand's thumb against her chin a few times, and then provided examples. In one such example, she spoke about a person applying for a job in an organization she works for, in which she is on the hiring committee. She described the person as a stranger before receiving the application. Although the application provided much information about the person, she had not yet met the person and so can not call her an acquaintance. Neither can she call her a stranger, because she has too much knowledge of the person for that. At this point, she explained she would use the positional role title "applicant." In Belle's experiences,

the term applicant does not merely indicate the person's positional role within the organization, but (in her usage of the term) the type of interpersonal relationship she has with the person. In a similar example, Belle described how her use of the word "colleague" indicates an interpersonal relationship with someone she would not call a friend, but whom she feels more strongly about than simply "a co-worker."

As Belle and I discussed the topic, we explored whether or not it is possible for her to have a friendship in an organizational setting that disregards the contextual influences of the setting. Belle was quick to preface her opinion by stating it was her collection of relational experiences in organizational settings that led her to the realization that it is best not to engage in personal friendships at work. That said, Belle stated confidently that the prospect is certainly possible and that she had experienced such a thing. She portrayed her experiences with this occurrence as typically "messy," remarking that such relationships compromise her work perspective and lead to "employee vulnerability." Because of this dilemma, Belle indicates she works hard to consciously employ the context in the relationships in which she engages in the organizational setting.

Throughout the interview, Belle stated that the questions were difficult to answer. She explained she does not often think about the way in which she discerns between organizational and non-organizational setting friendships and acquaintanceships. She admits she does not actively consider how she makes the distinctions.

3.3 Celina's Conversational Interview

"Celina" is a pseudonym for a 56-year-old female co-researcher from a small rural village in Alaska. Celina works full-time as a mental health clinician serving the village and its surrounding communities. At her invitation, I traveled to the village on a weekend to conduct the interview at her home. Celina's home is a log cabin built prior to statehood and features two small bedrooms attached to a large open living room and with a vaulted ceiling. Celina told me the structure was the village's church at one time. Like many of the village's residents, Celina keeps sled dogs and their howling occasionally interrupted our interview.

Celina poured us each a cup of tea and sat down as I began reading through the informed consent document (Appendix A). Celina verbally expressed her consent to participate in the interview and I began by asking her how she defines "friend." Celina laughed aloud, and took a deep breath. She told me:

> Outside of formal social groups or workgroups, I suppose the classic definition for friend is a person that you know for some period of time, long enough that you are able to be more real with them and they are able to be more real with you than the normal social or professional masks that we wear.

I nodded my head and asked her what she means by "real." She pursed her lips and replied:

> There are so many people – I think because we live in large groups, groups larger than family groups – people have a tendency to need to keep other people at bay or at a distance, and we have artificially constructed walls that we put up and

> friends are people that you don't need to keep a distance to so you can be more genuine…There are lots of people who, I imagine, think I'm their friend and I'm not their friend. They don't really know who I am, they just know the little mask I wear to be able to get through the day.

Celina sipped her tea, squinted her eyes a bit and turned her head toward the front door as one of the dogs howled in the background. She mused:

> I am kind of taken aback at how causally people allow themselves to be vulnerable in relationships and I am sure that, when I was younger, I had more friends than I do now. The older I am, the more reserved I am in regards to how much information people have about me, how close I allow them to get into my sphere. I would use invitation as a measuring stick. For somebody to be my friend, they would have to be somebody that I'm okay having in my house, and I've been into their home. I don't go to very many people's houses, and I don't invite very many people into my home.

Celina used this concept of invitation to discern friendships from acquaintanceships. I wondered aloud if she would use this concept to define friendships and acquaintanceships inside an organizational setting. Celina hesitated answering at first, turning her eyes up toward the ceiling, humming a moment, and then indicated she does, but her current work situation is special. She explained to me her current work environment is one in which nearly all the employees, regardless of their positional roles in the agency, are very close. I inquired as to what she meant by "very close" and she quickly explained, "I have been in their [co-workers] homes and they have been in my

home. We have had pajama parties together, held each other's babies and grandbabies, and all the things that come with my definition of friendship." She continued, explaining that she had not found herself in such a situation, one where she maintained so many close friendships at work, ever before in her life. She told me there were only two exceptions in her working experiences whereby she developed "genuine friendship" from a co-worker relationship. I could tell by the tone of her voice and her look of self-amusement that she was earnestly surprised at hearing herself talk about her current employment. She expressed this verbally saying:

> When I first went to the agency where I work, my supervisor said, 'Oh, we're friends and you'll be our friend soon.' And I said, 'Oh, no, I don't make friends at work.' That has always been my pattern; I don't make friends at work. Work is where you earn the money. Work is not where you go to make friends. I've always found personal relationships in the workplace to be problematic, because they complicate things. With the exception of my current employment, I would be able to say quite cleanly, I don't have friends in my work life. I would say I was surprised to find myself becoming friends with the people that I work with. I don't know if that's just because I'm 56 and menopausal and relationships are more important to me today…or if it's just the nature of the agency, the culture of the agency, and the values that we have.

Celina's work setting consists of a small office building with a total of five employees, including herself. She told me the positional roles of the employees consist of a supervisor, a subordinate, and two co-workers. When describing the positional

relationships, Celina chuckled to herself and divulged, "One is the new kid on the block and I'm not too certain if I'm her friend."

Celina seemed quite at ease discussing her work situation, so we continued to use her work as the primary example of organizational setting. Before I could ask what makes this particular work environment so special, so different from other work organizations, Celina spoke about it. She explained:

> The closest relationships I have at work are my supervisee and my direct supervisor. A year and a half ago, as a result of the agency envisioning process, [we] did a revamp of our organizational chart, which is now in a circle and indicates that, although there are lines of authority in regards to how decisions are made, there are not lines of authority in who decides what work will be done by whom. We have an agency that functions with everybody pretty much having equal say, although there are state statutes and federal regulations on people who have to make decisions in regard to clinical signage and stuff like that. Just the nature of how the agency functions, or is currently functioning, it really does away with the role of who's the boss, who's the supervisor. It's very non-hierarchical.

Celina sees their new circular structure as creating a situation where it is easier to become friends with someone who has the positional role of supervisor. I began to contemplate whether this unique work environment would allow friendships to occur with non-employee members of the organization, such as clients. Celina's organization is client-centered, but there are additional complications. The clients are not always

voluntary customers; they can be ordered there by a judge, by their employer, or as part of a mediated resolution. Additionally, there is a distinct and ingrained set of ethical practices and procedures in place at mental health provider organizations. Celina described the relationships between clinician and client (at her organization) as "not sexually intimate, but very intimate relationships" and noted that they often visit the client in the client's home. She added, "We've held them while they were vomiting. We've taken them into the emergency room and watched them get stitched up. Those are very intense relationships." I returned the eye contact of Celina's intense gaze and asked, to see if I had understood her correctly, if one can be intimate without being friends. She laughed:

> Time will tell! That is the danger. And I know that's why there are such strong structures against having friendship relationships between clients and clinicians, but it's an issue people providing services in remote and rural communities in Alaska struggle with tremendously. When you live in a village with 500 people, when you're providing those kind of services, you are really not able to maintain the clinically correct distance that the Western model preaches.

In Celina's experience, her agency has never had issues where a clinician improperly crossed boundaries with clients. She did feel it important, however, to tell me that her agency has experienced clients becoming employees there, "that's not unusual in Alaska. Because we're all in the little soup dish together. That's something that you would never hear of in Chicago or New York City. It would just never happen." In this case, I predicted that having a friendship with someone in this situation would be

particularly problematic considering the possibility for relapse by the former client to needing services. Celina smiled and nodded in agreement. She expressed her confidence in the agency's clinicians to be able to recognize when their objectivity is compromised, or at least be open to someone else pointing it out. She remarked laughingly:

> I'm lucky, because I work for an agency where we're allowed to tell the boss 'you're full of shit, you don't know what you're talking about' and have a boss who is receptive enough to say, 'that might be true, let me think about it.'

Wanting to explore an organizational setting other than her work environment, I moved the conversation to a discussion of clubs. Celina professed a long membership in the organization, Alcoholics Anonymous (AA). Celina claimed she uses the same definitional standards within the AA setting to discern friendships from other types of relationships, but perceives a contextual phenomenon that causes problems in making such evaluations. That phenomenon is created by the 12-step modality utilized in AA. Celina confessed:

> There are a lot of people in my AA experience who would believe they are my friends because they would believe they know me fairly well and, in fact, they probably do know me fairly well; the nature of 12-step meetings are that people are pretty intimate with people in regards to information shared. People would know me enough to think they are my friends, but I would not be their friend. I can think of at least two occasions when I've come to grips with the situation where a person thought they were my friend and I had to tell them, 'no, we really

> aren't friends' and the deciding factor for me was, you [the AA person to whom she was talking] probably know me a lot better than I know you.

I interjected, asking if these organizational members would be acquaintances and how to define acquaintance in an organizational setting. Celina paused a moment, looking up to the ceiling and leaning back in her chair. Celina told me it was someone of whom she may have intimate knowledge, but no kinship, despite the relationship's longevity. She used the people she knows from her recovery as an example of acquaintanceship. I speculated that this conceptualization would also apply to clients at her place of work. Celina agreed, but indicated making a distinction between clients and acquaintances:

> Except that I feel a sense of duty in a client/clinician relationship that I don't necessarily feel in an acquaintanceship, a sense of stewardship around the relationship; a sense of my need to function and to be as functional as I can in that relationship, which I would not necessarily feel in an acquaintanceship.

I proposed that her experience seems to support that the sense of stewardship in relationships differentiates organizational acquaintanceships from non-organizational acquaintanceships. Celina was quick to confirm, "I had that same sense in AA." She pointed out that stewardship and responsibility are an expectation in clinician/client relationships required by a professional code, but are voluntary in mundane social relationships where, if she chooses not to engage in stewardship "the only code I'm violating would be my own social code." She elaborated with an example:

> I've had friendships with people who have significant mental health issues that became so problematic in relationships that I was not able to maintain the

> relationship because I cannot deal with symptomology at the friendship level. If that's happening in a client/clinician relationship I know exactly what to do; there's a protocol that I can follow and there are resources available. I can't take my friend and say, 'I need to pass you on to someone who can deal with what you're manifesting right here.'

Celina laughed aloud about this scenario, and voiced her regret that such services are not available at the social level. I sat there thinking about the strength of voluntary commitment and how its implementation and removal modify our positions in human relational networks. Celina continued:

> If that happens in a marriage, you can say 'For crying out loud, you are my wife!' or 'Jesus Christ, you are my husband!' but in a friendship if you say 'this is an issue and it's interfering with our ability to continue the friendship,' it's very informal. It's very easy to say 'there is no friendship' if you find this to be an issue.

I quickly pointed out that marriage involves a contractual obligation and Celina immediately replied:

> Which might be why marriage is! I know that Mark and I, who were laughing this morning that we've been living together for 15 years…we have no paper that says we have to stay together; we have only a day to day verbal agreement, one day at a time in partnership. There's nothing really that holds us together other than personal choice.

Referring back to the organizational setting, I elicited clarification from Celina, trying to understand if she would extend this idea that contractual obligation is a primary influence in stewardship and thus in discerning acquaintances in and outside of the work setting. She added that professional ethics is equally important concerning clients. She espoused:

> That's why we call them clients. And when they are pills and pains in the butt we expect that. And it's our job as clinicians to be able to deal with that, and if we can't deal with that, pass it on to somebody who can deal with that. And not take it personally. And not see it as a failing on their part or a failing on your part. It's just this relationship is not a good fit here.

3.4 Dianne's Conversational Interview

"Dianne" is a pseudonym for a female co-researcher in her fifties. She is a full-time employee of an educational institution where she works as an administrative purchasing officer. The interview took place at a designated interview room on the UAF campus. Dianne is behaviorally conservative, elegant, and unassuming.

I read the verbal informed consent form (Appendix A) to Dianne and she verbally consented to participate in the interview. Without prefacing the subject any further I requested that Dianne describe for me how she defines friendship in mundane social settings. Dianne expressed initial confusion, stating, "I'm not sure which kind of friend you mean, because to me there are many different types of friends." Leaving the question open, I simply advised her to start with that very thought. She described having best friends, whom were confidants, and "work friends" who were "best characterized by

cooperation and friendliness, but the friendship (for the most part) ends after the work day." She added that she would never rely on work friends for anything personal.

Dianne asked me what other types of friends there might be. Not wanting to bias her description of her own experiences, I requested that she describe how she delineates between friends and acquaintances. She explained to me that:

> Acquaintance is friendly, always. I'm always friendly with people I just know by face or by name…but I don't think about them until I see them…I'm friendly when I see them and then forget about it afterward…I don't dwell on it once we're apart.

At this point, Dianne has delineated between friend and acquaintance, and between work friends and extra-organizational friends. I recapitulated this to her and she confirmed with a confident "Absolutely!" I saw this response as an indicator that she has a clearly defined line between these concepts and requested more detail. Dianne told me she is guided by her years of experience, and the difference is primarily as level of information disclosure and activeness of the relationship beyond the organizational setting. She read my non-verbal gestures correctly and clarifies, further explaining that she judges friendships by the type and depth of personal information she discloses and whether or not the relationship continues to be active once the dyad is no longer engaged in the context of the organizational setting. When I paraphrased her description back to her she paused and noted that she always thinks of her work friends as friends after she leaves the organization, but she seldom takes a work relationship and "spends a lot of time talking

about it with a closer personal friend. The concern is there, but not a wish to explore very much further."

To me, it sounded as though anyone at her work setting would qualify as a work "friend" and so I probed her for description of a work "acquaintance." I was surprised when she told me she does not have acquaintances at work. She described viewing all members of the department in which she works as work friends, but when I asked what she would call a first day new hire, she admitted that would be an acquaintance until she acquired a minimal amount of personal information. She even went so far as to declare a co-worker who limited conversational interaction strictly to professional, business-related information, to be more than an acquaintance. For example:

> There are a couple of people that I really care about. There's not personal disclosure, but there is a sharing that goes on in a way so that I know more about them and they know more about me than just our work relationship. There may be others that I have seen and worked with for the last seven years on a daily basis that I know about them, but…I would never seek them out, outside the office.

I wonder aloud what she would call the "strictly business" office mate that is more than an acquaintance, but not quite a friend and she tells me, "co-worker." When personal distaste is involved, Dianne simply resorts to referring to them by their positional titles.

Having heard Dianne describe her perspective on differentiating work and personal friends, I asked her if she sees a work friend becoming a personal friend as a possibility. She responded:

> Sure, I see it all the time, but my reality is…it's safer to keep business, business… But I think this has a lot to do with your position. For example, if you're faculty and you…have a long term commitment to where you work and to getting along with the people you may work with for decades…that's a whole different situation than for someone…with no long term guarantees. I would be disinclined to get close to someone so dis-alike [sic] in my work environment. It could cause unhappiness, strain, and separation.

She further commented that, if she really cared for a person at work in an unbalanced authority role, she would engage in a friendship with that person, but not until after she was outside of that organizational environment. Exploring this concept further, I ask how she might approach a scenario in which she held a friendship with a co-worker who was then elevated to a supervisory role, thus unbalancing the authority levels in the working relationship. Dianne was unable to answer the question from her own experiences, as that has never happened to her.

I wondered if Dianne applies these same or similar concepts to other organizations, ones in which she is not involved in for employment purposes. Dianne professed membership in the Parents and Teachers Association (PTA) and other child/parent organizations. Confronted with calling upon her experiences in non-work organizational settings, Dianne declared she would still differentiate friendships in those organizations from personal friendships in the mundane social context. She again addressed the issue of a relationship being based in a single contextual setting as a primary issue:

> You have this common goal, and for as long as that endeavor is active, you see each other, you cooperate, you get things done, and as soon as it's done and over then…each of you blend back into your backgrounds and don't go beyond that until you come together again for some other function.

I asked Dianne to call upon her experiences as a student and she began to talk about her good feelings toward her graduate cohort. As she talked about the university setting as a student organizational setting, she again identified authority structure as a key influence:

> In the cohort I feel things are pretty even. We're different ages, we've got different backgrounds, we're moving through at different speeds, but we're all working toward a common degree in a certain field and that feels equal enough. But that equality is not the case in the work environment…I would say it is an issue of organizational chart and awareness of…where you are on it.

Dianne isn't sure that it is the same way for everyone, that there may be relationships in work settings or people who don't see it the same way; that her conceptualizations may strictly be her personal perspective. She told me she thinks her perspective may be generational and linked to her strong sense of family; that it is possible a younger generation would have an entirely different perspective and understanding. Dianne went to college to be professionally trained for administrative work and she suggested her perspective may be based on the educational materials popularly presented during those times.

As we continued to talk, we began to recycle previous parts of the discussion and eventually Dianne stated she did not think she could add more than she had already. She

restated that "friendship is not the same as work friendship" and added "It shouldn't be the same word, but I understand why we use friendship. Because that's what there is to use." As I am about to end the interview, Dianne asked to comment on one other experience on this topic. Dianne confessed she works during the summers at a job with several close personal friends, all of whom had close friendships with each other prior to working together in the organization setting. She noted that they are very careful to protect each other. Aside from "making sure whatever choices we make at the work place are seen correctly, we support each other, and are careful about the work relationship within the friendship." I inquired as to which role takes priority, their positional roles in the organization or their relational roles as friends. She replied frankly, "I would say the personal. I would rather quit than hurt any of them or cause them any discomfort. My friendship with them is more important than the work relationship." She stopped a moment, then smiled a bit and added, "Of course, any sort of situation like that would alter the friendship." She laughed, "But that's a different matter."

3.5 Emma's Conversational Interview

"Emma" is a pseudonym for a 23-year-old female co-researcher. She is a full-time graduate student on a teaching assistanceship currently completing her Master's degree. The interview took place at a designated interview room on the UAF campus. Emma is young and energetic, and is quite knowledgeable of interpersonal relationship literature.

After reading the informed consent document (Appendix A) into record, and Emma consenting to the interview, I immediately asked for her definition of friend in the mundane social world. Emma informed me that she categorizes friendships by the

primary context in which they occur, such as "school friends, work friends, or best friends." Without my prompting, she indicated she categorizes acquaintances in the same way, but acquaintance lacks an element of caring for or about the person. She elaborated:

> Caring about the person in the sense of what's going on with them, what's happening in their lives. Genuinely, rather than in that question, 'hi, how are you?'... that's not an actual question, it's just a greeting... For me with friends...I'm genuinely interested in knowing...[and] I expect that. If they ask me, I expect them to stand and wait for me to explain it to them.

Emma repeated to me that she defines friend categories by the primary context in which they occur, and then told me there is not much difference at this time in her life between friends and work friends. She proposed that this has to do with the amount of time she spends at work; that her primary friend type interactions occur in her working environment. Emma sighed deeply, cocked her head to one side and looked out the window. I waited for her to say what was on her mind. Finally, she spoke her thoughts:

> I think we are very unique as an organization on the whole...We have a group that are taking the same classes...We're going through the same process academically and personally...There are a lot of things to talk about that matter to everybody.

I wondered if simple commonality and proximity are all that are necessary for Emma to call someone a friend. I pointed out that she still has a choice about to whom she will apply the label and asked her if she truly considers everyone in her work organization a friend. Emma nodded knowingly as though it were obvious where my question was

going. She told me there are members of the organization whom she does not consider friends beyond the borders of the organization. She indicated that, were her current job in a typical "nine to five" type of business, there would be those with whom she would not choose to spend time outside of the work environment. Although we had been discussing personal friendships in the context of work, I supposed Emma was also expressing a distinction between a work friend and a work acquaintance.

When queried about the influence of positional roles, Emma explained that it is all about personal perceptions; for her it is about her perception of how the dyadic partner perceives her, to be precise. She proposed that positional role influence manifests itself in the perceived perception constructed in the dyadic interaction. If Emma believes the organizational co-member perceives her only as filling a particular positional role, then she only interacts relationally in the dyad within the boundaries of the work/task roles. For instance, she told me there are four people in her current employment/student organization that take on supervisory/management positional roles; there are two whom she considers friends and two whom she considers acquaintances. Emma does not perceive these relationships as being ones of positional equality and explicates:

> It's a very interesting sort of relationship in the sense that it kind of reminds me of, almost like, and I don't want to use the word, but sort of like parental. Where you have that mentor aspect where you're learning from them, but there's also that reciprocation where they've shown you they can learn from you as well.

In contrast, she perceives the two whom she considers acquaintances as only perceiving her in the role of subordinate. Emma points out that it is not that she dislikes these two individuals, only that the task/work roles have established the relational boundaries.

As the interview came to a close, I gave Emma the opportunity to make any final comments. Emma explained that distinguishing friends and acquaintances and their contextual influences is a difficult thing to do, more art than science and something that she is not consciously aware of doing while in the act. She closed the interview with a chuckle, stating "It sounds very existential. It's just a feeling, a vibe I get from the person."

3.6 Frank's Conversational Interview

"Frank" is a pseudonym for a male co-researcher in his mid-forties. He is pursuing a master's degree and works part-time at local food and entertainment establishments as a waiter and bartender. The interview took place at a designated interview room on the UAF campus. Frank was pressed for time, but seemed happy to talk about his experiences on the topic of this research.

I read Frank the verbal informed consent form (Appendix A) and obtained his consent to participate in the interview. After giving him a brief synopsis of the intent of the study, I asked Frank to describe how he defines "friend" and "acquaintance." Frank laughed and sarcastically retorted, "Gee, that's not a tough one." Frank had difficulty describing how he conceptualizes friendship, starting and stopping repeatedly. Finally he decides:

> An acquaintance covers the broad spectrum of everybody you may encounter in your everyday living your life…on or all of those different people you encounter in your everyday life. A friend could be one of those people…[but] something happens during that acquaintanceship where one or the other suggests…some friendship activity outside the specific context you're in.

I began to see Frank's perception of the primary difference being a friendship has multiple contexts and wanted to see if this idea functioned for Frank in his perceptions of organizational friendships and acquaintanceships. I entered into this line of questioning inquiring about his experiences with "work friends." Frank spoke at length about the different characteristics of his friends before finally stating:

> I think in a work relationship…you start out being acquaintances and then you build a friendship…Eventually developing friendships, you may go do something after work together or you may hang out at the same bar together and then you develop a friendship.

When I heard this, it seemed to me that he was describing a single context interpersonal relationship becoming a friendship through the expansion of the relationship's primary setting to include multiple contexts. I pressed for clarification and Frank responded, "You can learn a lot about each other just being in a work relationship, but I think relationships outside of work develop more personally…[They] may be coming over to your house and hanging out." Whereas Frank notes a difference between "work friends" and extra-organizational friends, he does not initially describe distinctions between acquaintances regardless of context. However, after considering the question and attempting to explain

this to me, he finally stated, "Acquaintanceships at work and acquaintanceships out in the public are different in that acquaintanceships at work…you both work for the organization. You have something that's common to you both, and that would be the organization."

At this point, I was not quite sure what might lead to a clearer understanding of these differences, so I moved the topic to an exploration of other possible influences in the organizational setting. I began by probing Frank's perceptions of positional roles as an influence. Frank sees positional roles as affecting the respect protocols in an interpersonal relationship stating, "I think it adds deference to your relationship when they [co-organizational members] are in that [higher position] role." I wondered then if Frank lacked deference in his extra-organizational friendships. He stated that he doesn't typically apply deference to friends, but qualified this response by explaining that any deference imbued by the positional role of the dyadic partner in the workplace carries over to the extra-organizational setting:

> I'm saying if you have friends outside the organization that don't work for the same organization as you do, even though they are higher up in their position in another organization, I don't see any deference there. But I do see it if you're friends with [an organizational co-member] outside the organization…and they are in a position that may be higher than you, or even lower than you…

At this point, Frank related to me that a pending appointment must take priority and I ended the interview.

3.7 Greg's Conversational Interview

"Greg" is a pseudonym for a male co-researcher in his mid-forties. He is a longtime Alaska resident, but has traveled the world extensively. He works as a public servant for a governmental agency. The interview took place at Greg's home and conducted in his garage in order to be free from interruption. Greg is intelligent and deliberate when he speaks. He thought intently before every answer, apparently collecting his thoughts and doing his best to articulate his wisdom and experience clearly. The interview was short, just under half an hour, due to scheduling restraints.

I began the interview by asking Greg how he defines the words "friend" and "acquaintance" in everyday social interaction. For Greg, a friend is someone that he is "more than indifferent to see, meet, or talk with." Curiously, rather than define the word acquaintance, he illustrated his understanding by presenting examples: "Acquaintances are work associates, people I have regular dealings with, the person I go to with questions about my car, the guy [sic] at the counter at the parts store, and the pharmacist. Things like that." Wanting to make sure I understand the primary difference he is describing, I asked him for clarification that the primary distinction is indifference. He responded with an anecdote:

> Yeah. There's this cartoon in the New Yorker magazine of a man standing in front of a boardroom table. A stodgy old man saying, 'Well, I want to thank all of you because I couldn't have done it without you, or people very much like you.' In other words, a lot of these acquaintances, anyone would [fit] the bill. It wouldn't matter if the pharmacist was behind the counter at [the auto parts store]

> or the [auto parts store] guy [sic] was behind the counter at the pharmacy, provided they had the training, because they don't mean anything to me.

Feeling I have a clear understanding of Greg's point now, I searched his experience differentiating mundane social friends from organizational setting friends. I started by asking if these two types of friends are the same and Greg was quick to say "No." He says this, but then stops abruptly, lifting his chin upward and appearing to be thinking carefully about something. After a few seconds he followed with "No, and here I think is a sticking point. I think we introduce people as friends, that aren't actually friends, but we wouldn't necessarily tell them that either." From this response, I suggest to Greg that, for him, friend describes a type of relationship that can have differing contexts. He agrees and relates that his own experiences confirm this for him. Greg professes membership in an "anonymous organization" and indicates he often uses the word "friend" in discussing a co-member of that organization, even if he does not necessarily consider that person a friend, in order to protect their mutual anonymity.

I wondered if the same concept might apply to an organization where anonymity is not required, but Greg told me his work situation is a bit miserable and that he does not "apply friend to people at work much." He pauses for a moment and cites work at previous places of employment, "At other work sites, friends are people who I would choose to be with outside of the forced work association." This leads me to believe it is the organizational setting itself that created his differentiation between the two types of friends, and I inquire if it is possible for him to meet somebody in the context of the work environment and then become friends to the extent that work is no longer the primary

context of the friendship. Greg quickly answers in the affirmative. We talk briefly about positional roles and their affect. Greg explains positional roles do influence his friendships in the organizational context, but qualifies this statement by pointing out that it is not because of the "bonds of friendship," but rather to maintain a level of professionalism in the workplace. I probed his meaning of the word "professionalism" and he explained that professionalism is about strong mores and ethics. I wondered if his conceptualization of professionalism is less about creating distance between friends in the workplace than about protecting friendships from complications caused by interference between the work and friend roles. I told Greg that I believe there can be friendships that extend beyond the organizational setting, to a point where the friendship status takes perceived priority over the mission of the organization. Greg immediately verbalized his agreement with this statement and nods his head, audibly chuckling. He adds that he feels these differentiations are subjective and experience dependant.

Chapter 4

Human Science Research Analysis

In the last chapter, narrative descriptions were provided of the seven co-researchers' lived experiences in discerning friendships and acquaintances within and without organizational settings. In this chapter, I use narrative analysis to examine this phenomenon. Narrative analysis "requires close attentiveness to what interviewers and respondents say to each other, and how they say it" (Mishler, 1991, p. 76) As such, I studied closely the dialogue that occurred between the co-researchers and me, as well as the reflexive dialogue between myself and the capta, in order to understand the co-researchers' experience and to create new understanding and meaning through my part in the reconstruction of the co-researchers' experiences and selves. Based on my understanding as the researcher, I drew narrative meanings from the co-researchers' stories. Two primary themes arose from the interviews: I address those themes as a difficulty in identifying "friend," and "horizons of friendship" as the key differentiator between "friend" and "organization friend."

4.1 Identifying "Friend"

The first noticeable commonality among the entire group of co-researchers was a difficulty in identifying "friend." This theme surfaced in three particular ways: difficulty in defining the term, difficulty with modern use of the term, and an inability to identify a suitable alternative term to rectify the modern usage. Initially, all the co-researchers had difficulty in defining the term "friend." Each co-researcher used the term "friend" uniquely to label an interpersonal relationship with particular characteristics. Andrew and

Belle experienced some difficulty differentiating a friend from an acquaintance, as well as a friendship or acquaintanceship bound by an organizational setting as its primary context, versus those possessing friendship and acquaintanceship characteristics in all contexts. Celina often laughed out loud during her interview, seemingly bemused at her own struggle in articulating what the labels meant to her. For Dianne and Emma, every physical and conceptual setting provided nuanced definitions. Frank began the exploration of his own definition by commenting on the fact that it was "tough" to define, and Greg articulated his definition through illustrated examples of the type of social and positional roles to whom he applies the terms. By listening to each co-researcher narrate their experiences, together we constructed the understanding that defining the term and applying it to an interpersonal relationship is much more art than science, so to speak. It is an act that we do every time we interact with another person, but which we are not typically cognizant of doing. We each have socially constructed, unique (albeit perpetually evolving) perspectives that determine how we identify "friend" and apply the label.

Second, all the co-researchers challenge the modern use of the term "friend." As each co-researcher engaged in narrating their individual lived experiences, they expressed or implied a similar notion, that we apply the word friend to interpersonal relationships too liberally. We apply the term "friend" to interpersonal relationships that fail to meet both the typical lexiconical definition of the relationship type, and the socially espoused standards for such relationships as intersubjectively agreed upon by these co-participant members of U.S. American culture. The reasons for this vary by individual and are likely

influenced by the similitude-based respect system that is prevalent in this culture and utilizes formal language in an informal manner in order to infer connection and camaraderie between dyadic members. In the similitude-based respect system, dyadic partners engage in a use of language informality that implies the two are alike, mutually respected, and know each other well, despite the fact that none of these may be true. In this respect system, we often use the term "friend" for purposes other than espousing the "friend" status of an interpersonal relationship. Belle suggested labels carry certain emotive imagery for her, and thus she chooses to apply terms to relationships accordingly. Celina posed from her experiences that people use the term in order to create the illusion of intimacy for purposes of social pleasantry, while maintaining relational distance to protect ourselves from vulnerability. Greg's interview capta illustrates how the term might be used to maintain anonymity or provide ambiguity.

In addition to this pragmatic use of the language, another reason for this phenomenon may be the lack of a suitable alternative word. When pressed, each of the co-researchers could find other ways to label a friendship type of relationship without using the term "friend," but they seemed equally dissatisfied with these alternatives due to their inadequacies. All co-researchers agreed that there are different types, levels, and degrees of friendships. When asked to distinguish between these types, they utilized semantic discrimination; rather than applying a single term/label to each relationship subcategory, they used thicker language to describe each subcategory as it related to the others. For these co-researchers, a suitable alternative term was not within their natural vocabulary. Instead, they used the term "friend" with modifiers that illustrated their

specific contexts, such as using "work" to make "work friends." Dianne noted when "friendship" is applied to "work friends," "It shouldn't be the same word, but I understand why we use 'friendship.' Because that's what there is to use." They also referred to the dyadic relationships as friendships, but then labeled the dyadic partner with a positional role such as colleague or supervisor. Within the natural language of the co-researchers, no alternative term exists that the co-researchers employ to identify an interpersonal relationship as a friendship, while differentiating it from a specific organizational context.

4.2 Horizons of Friendship

The second theme found to be common among the capta from the participant group was "horizons of friendship" as the primary differentiator between "friend" and "organizational friend." "Horizons of friendship" is a less problematic way of describing supracontextuality, the idea that there are multiple conceptual horizons of varying scopes through which we discern organizational from extra-organizational friendships. The term "horizons," used here, is from the phenomenological conceptualization of intersubjectivity as presented by Pilotta and Mickunas (1990). To better understand this, I will discuss interpersonal relationships as occurring within discursively constructed contextual settings.

For purposes of this analysis, I refer to both organizational enterprises and the everyday mundane social world as contexts and/or settings. When conceptualizing these environments as contexts or settings, it is important to avoid the assumption of the physical connotations of the "container" metaphor that those interpreting these terms tend

to infer. The "container" metaphor is an ontological metaphor used to refer to abstract concepts in a more concrete manner; in this case I characterize the concepts of contexts and settings as having an inside and an outside with mutually exclusive properties (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980, p. 51). The insides and outsides of these entities are not separated by physical walls, but rather by perceptual boundaries. For example, one can be "at work" without being "in the office;" likewise one can be at the neighborhood park and discursively reconstruct the workplace. With these stipulations in mind, it is possible to perceive contexts and settings in terms of their scope of the horizon.

An organization is a single context with a limited scope of the horizon. We belong to many organizations, each with their own limited view. When we engage in interpersonal relationships within an organization, we discern that relationship from others based on its horizonal scope. Outside the organizational environments, a broader social setting exists; it is a supra-context that does not "contain" sub-contextual settings, but rather supersedes all their collective scopes. It is not that the person in this extra-organizational setting perceives a greater piece of the horizon, but rather that this extra-organizational setting *is* the horizon of which the persons within the sub-contexts only perceive a limited view. The horizon is always the unique, socially constructed, perpetually evolving, perception of the individual. The individual always views the whole horizon, but is also always aware of which piece of the horizon is within the scope of those within each context.

Putting these notions together, I explain my understanding of this horizon theme thusly: when individuals identify someone, whom they know only from their place of

work, as "friend," they conceptualize that person as a "work friend," associating the relationship with the primary relational context of the organizational setting in which they are employed. Andrew made this conceptualization by seeing relationships inside the organizational setting as "artificially created" by the organizational setting. When the perceiver lives extra-organizational experiences, those within their everyday social world, they perceive the entirety of their horizon. The whole horizon view includes the parts seen within the scope of the organizational setting, and, although a part of the greater horizon, the perceiver is always aware (to some degree) of which part of the horizon is visible to the organizational context. If these two people interact outside of the work setting, such as an office dinner party held at an off-site restaurant, the two may not discursively recreate their work setting at the restaurant, but their positional roles, job functions, previous and everyday jobsite interaction traits, and established system of respect at the office will influence their extra-organizational interactions. U.S. American cultural members self-identify (to some degree) with their organizational memberships; both dyadic members of this particular interaction are reminders to each other of their organizational identity, mutually reassuring the primary context of their interpersonal relationship.

So, what if a person knows another through two organizational settings? A person may identify a single person as "friend" from two organizational settings, such as work and the City softball league. In the case that they only know each other in these two contexts, they would each possess a greater scope of the other's horizon than if they only share a single organizational setting, but would still perceive each other as something like

a "work and softball league friend." Celina illustrated this well when she discussed the difference between her conceptualization of her co-workers as friends in comparison to her conceptualization of the relationships she has with her clients. Although, involved in very intimate interactions (such as holding them as they vomited), something more was required contextually, and she described that as "invitation." Celina mentioned the idea of "invitation;" for her, the "work friend" only became conceptualized as "friend" when she and a dyadic partner from an organizational setting had been inside of each other's homes. Greg only considers people from organizational settings with whom he chooses to interact "outside the forced work environment" as friends, and Diane's relationships with "work friends" ends when the work day is over.

Realistically, a person can never have a whole view of another's "horizon," but we can perceive them to do so. The more of our horizon we perceive a person to view, the more we identify them as "friend," per the definitional and societal standard. If a person identifies another as "friend" through perceiving that individual as having a large scope of his or her exclusive horizon, and then they end up working together at the same organization, the perceiver does not see the other as "work friend," but rather as a "friend" with whom he or she happens to work. Because they also share a common organizational setting, he or she will likely try to preserve the work relationship by mutually reassuring each other's work identities through acknowledging and respecting positional roles, titles, and place in the authority and organizational structures, and following the established respect system, while at or reconstructing the work site. Although the new context will result in each dyadic interactant becoming aware of, and

influenced by, the part of their individual perspectival horizons that are present because of their organizational affiliation, the organizational setting will not be their primary relational context and the knowledge that their relationship has a greater perceived horizonal view of each other influences that setting. Celina's proposed authority structure plays a role in how friendship relationships form in the workplace. Dianne illustrated that she sees positional roles as being a major factor in the friendship identification between the settings, and indicated she would wait to build a relationship with someone in an organization whose positional role was not equal to her power level in the organizational structure, until she was no longer affiliated with that enterprise. Adding to this sentiment, Frank described his experience as including deference to positional roles even outside the organizational setting.

4.3 Conclusion and Implications for Future Research

The purpose of this research is to better understand the everyday lived experience of U.S. American organizational members' in discerning friendships and acquaintanceships within and without organizational settings. In this study, I examined the lived experiences of seven individuals who actively engage in memberships in organizational enterprises. Through narrative, each of these seven co-researchers related difficulties identifying "friend," and perceived "horizons of friendship" as the primary differentiator between "friend" and "organizational friend." Other than the potential new insights that this research has brought to the co-researchers who participated in this study, potential benefits may exist for others.

One potential benefit may be improving understanding of interpersonal relationships for those working in culturally diverse organizations, or in organizations that do business with and in communities with a predominant culture other than their own. Where U.S. Americans utilize a complex and messy identification and application of the term "friend," many cultures do not. For some cultures, friendship bears very specific (and sometimes intense) cultural obligations, burdens, and debts. In such cultures, being called (or referred to as) a "friend" in communicative interaction encumbers that person with these socio-cultural expectations. For instance, if a U.S. American and a rural Chinese were engaged as business partners for a considerable period of time and under good terms, and the U.S. American introduced the Chinese business partner to another American, that person might say something like, "Ms. Smith, this is my good friend, Mr. Xu." Such a seemingly simple statement to the American may cause a degree of confusion, discomfort, or even great cognitive dissonance for the Chinese business partner. What is normal conversational address for the U.S. American, may suddenly burden the Chinese business partner with an immense amount of social baggage. This research may give that Chinese business partner better understanding of how Americans involved in organizational enterprises use the term "friend" in communicative interaction and how they discern between the "organization friend" relationship conceptualization and the "friend" relationship conceptualization.

As a result of this thematic analysis, one new question in particular has arisen in this research: in how many contexts must a single dyadic relationship be present before the dyadic members begin to see each other as seeing all or most of their perspectival

horizons? In other words, how broad a view of my own horizon must I perceive another as seeing before I identify and perceive that person as "friend" per the intersubjectively agreed upon social standard? I can foresee the potential for identifying a threshold, a point in which a relationship shares mutual contextual memberships, where the mutually assuring contextual reminders of our organizationally connected identities are diluted to a level where we no longer identify the relationship with an individual context unless we discursively reconstruct it. This is not to say that there are a number of contexts that can be counted, generalizable to all American cultural members, but rather a place in each individual's perspective where a change in natural language occurs.

Polkinghorne (1988) posits that the study of narrative meaning is to "make explicit the operations that produce its particular kind of meaning, and to draw out the implications this meaning has for understanding human existence" (p. 6). Further research on the topic of identifying "friend" and "horizons of friendship" would undoubtedly produce further understanding of human existence and insight into the social construction of relationship identities through human communicative interaction. It would be interesting to examine the lived experience of other cultures on this topic of study. It would also be particularly interesting for future research, conducted through qualitative research methodologies, to examine the lived experiences of cross-cultural dyads in relation to this topic of study.

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Appendix

IRB# 06-02 *Reviewed exempt*
January 17, 2006

Informed Consent Form

Study Title: A qualitative approach to understanding the everyday difference between acquaintanceship and friendship: How Western organizational members discriminate these concepts through communicative interaction.

Description of the Study:
You are being asked to take part in a research study about friendship, acquaintanceship, and the difference between the two. The goal of this study is to develop an understanding of how people define the difference between a friend and an acquaintance. Of particular interest, is an understanding from people who are currently employed in a local organization. You are being asked to take part in this study because you work for a local organization and have rich life experiences. Please read this form and ask any questions you may have before you agree to be in the study. If you decide to take part, you will participate in a 1 – 2 hour conversational interview during which we will discuss the topic of this study. Should a follow-up conversation be appropriate and needed, you may be asked to take part in a second conversation about the topic. You will help decide the date, time, and location of the interview to ensure your comfort and convenience.

Confidentiality:
The conversation will be audio recorded and later I will transcribe the recordings to text. All information will be kept in secure files. Your name will not be used and will not be directly connected to any part of our study. You are assured that all your responses in this study will be confidential. After a period of five years, all documentation and recordings will be destroyed. This study is about experience, not an individual person. The information that we get from this research may be used in papers, presentations, and publications, but you will never be personally identified in any way.

Risks and Benefits of Being in the Study:
We expect no risks or discomforts for you. If you find any part to be upsetting, we will immediately move the discussion away from the topic matter. Our focus is not on the relationships you have with a specific person. Our focus is on how you decide what a friend is and what an acquaintance is, in your relationships in general.

This study has possible benefits to you and society. We hope to better learn how U.S. Americans define friends and acquaintances. You may gain a better understanding of your experiences in defining your relationships with others. We do not guarantee that you will benefit from taking part in this study.

Voluntary Nature of the Study:
Your decision to take part in the study is voluntary. You are free to choose not to take part in the study or to stop taking part at any time without any penalty to you.

Contacts and Questions:
If you have questions now, feel free to ask us. If you have questions later, you may contact me, Bobby A. Hines, at 474-1876 or via email at fsbah9@uaf.edu, or my thesis advisor, Dr. Pamela R. McWherter at 474-7405 or via email at ffprm@uaf.edu.

If you have questions or concerns about your rights as a research subject, please contact the Research Coordinator in the Office of Research Integrity at 474-7800 (Fairbanks area) or 1-866-876-7800 (outside the Fairbanks area) or fyirb@uaf.edu.

Statement of Consent:
By verbally agreeing to participate and continuing on with the interview you are providing the research team your consent.